

WYCOMBE'S SOCCER SNOWMEN

HAMMER HAMLET

by Argus
Wycombe Wanderers 4,
Dulwich Hamlet 0

IT was a tribute to the astonishingly fine football served up by Wycombe Wanderers that their fans defied the Siberian blasts of snow and icy cold until the final whistle. Outplaying Isthmian League runners up Dulwich

Hamlet—"murdering" would be a more appropriate word—Wycombe beat the elements into submission, playing tear-away, true and accurate soccer on a slip, slosh and squelch surface of churned up mud and snow.

The worst playing conditions encountered at Loakes Park this season were a challenge to both sides. The Wanderers met it handsomely, responding with a first class exhibition of quickfire passing and use of the long ball—precisely the techniques missing in their ill-fated game at the Oval.

Young Hamlet—the average age of this talented teenage side was scarcely 20—were lamentably short of experience. They continually ran into trouble trying to work the ball through the gluepot middle and never looked like holding the Wanderers attack.

REVELATION

Wycombe's form was a revelation, and the success of the James experiment was one of the principal reasons. Big Peter, recalled to the first team after a long sojourn in the reserves, played his heart out until he was helped from the field, a few minutes from time, after knocking himself out making Wycombe's fourth and final goal.

His strength and punch worked a minor miracle among the home forwards and Paul Bates, switched to inside-left, looked happier for it, providing Gerald Free with an avalanche of passes.

To make Gerald's day complete, he had at his heels Ron Fryer revelling in his reinstatement at wing-half. This is clearly Ron's best position and in all the snow, slush and slime he controlled the slippery ball better than anybody.

Ragged Hamlet were lucky to escape a real licking. I lost count of the number of times the ball hit the Dulwich goalposts and crossbar and of the occasions goalkeeper Dave Darvill saved near certainties.

Chief scourge of the Hamlet defenders were wingers Gerald

Free and Len Worley. Both had the clear beating of their full backs, dribbling and feinting at speed and crossing the ball beautifully. Free, who scored two of the goals and had his best game for the Wanderers, was the player Hamlet feared most.

Wycombe's defence tackled with bite and purpose with Truett, Fryer and Beck outstanding. The mobility and speed of Beck robbed Dulwich more than once when they mounted a second half offensive.

FREE SCORES

But for Darvill and the Dulwich woodwork, the Wanderers would have skated to a convincing half time lead. Shooting powerfully, Worley was twice highly unfortunate not to find the net, Darvill making a glorious flying save to tip one shot over, and Free headed a Worley cross onto the visitors' crossbar before nodding Wycombe into a 13th minute lead from an almost identical position, Cliff Trott supplying the cross.

Peter James, unlucky with an earlier attempt, rolled another shot just wide of goal after shattering the Dulwich defence.

So much on top were the Wanderers that the infrequent Dulwich attacks came almost as a shock, but not to Dennis Syrett a lonely snowman between his goalposts.

HAPPY JAMES

After so many near misses, James held up hands in the air in glee in the 30th minute when he ran the ball round goalkeeper Darvill and fished it out of the back of the net. Free and Trott both thumped the woodwork with shots before Free scored Wycombe's third, seizing the chance to drive the ball in after Bates had beaten two men near the right wing corner flag.

Although Hamlet came into the game with a late flourish they only twice looked like scoring, when Les Brown painfully mis-kicked and when Jimmy Moring, galloping across goal, kicked a "cert" off the line.

A heavy snowstorm blinded players and spectators alike but Wanderers continued to play the more forceful and enterprising soccer. After James had charged Darvill and forced him to lose the ball, Bates rattled in goal number four.